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By Robert Baer

It's hard to tell what the Pentagon's objective really is in releasing the transcript of Khalid Sheikh Mohammed's confession. It certainly suggests the Administration is trying to blame KSM for al Qaeda terrorism, leading us to believe we've caught the master terrorist and that al Qaeda, and especially the everelusive bin Laden, is no longer a threat to the U.S.

But there is a major flaw in that marketing strategy. On the face of it, KSM, as he is known inside the government, comes across as boasting, at times mentally unstable. It's also clear he is making things up. I'm told by people involved in the investigation that KSM was present during *Wall Street Journal* correspondent Danny Pearl's execution but was in fact not the person who killed him. There exists videotape footage of the execution that minimizes KSM's role. And if KSM did indeed exaggerate his role in the Pearl murder, it raises the question of just what else he has exaggerated, or outright fabricated.

Just as importantly, there is an absence of collateral evidence that would support KSM's story. KSM claims he was "responsible for the 9/11 operation from AZ." Yet he has omitted details that would support his role. For instance, one of the more intriguing mysteries is who recruited and vetted the fifteen Saudi hijackers, the socalled "muscle." The wellfounded suspicion is that Qaeda was running a cell inside the Kingdom that spotted these young men and forwarded them to al Qaeda. KSM and al Qaeda often appear bumbling, but they would never have accepted recruits they couldn't count on. KSM does not offer us an answer as to how this worked.

KSM has also not offered evidence of state support to al Qaeda, though there is good evidence there was, even at a low level. KSM himself was harbored by a member of Qatar's royal family after he was indicted in the U.S. for the Bojinka plot — a plan to bomb twelve American

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airplanes over the Pacific. KSM and alQaeda also received aid from supporters in Pakistan, quite possibly from sympathizers in the Pakistani intelligence service. KSM provides no details that would suggest we are getting the full story from him.

Although he claims to have been alQaeda's foreign operations chief, he has offered no information about European networks. Today, dozens of investigations are going on in Great Britain surrounding the London tube bombings on July 7, 2005. Yet KSM apparently knew nothing about these networks or has not told his interrogators about them.

The fact is alQaeda is too smart to put all of its eggs in one basket. It has not and does not have a field commander, the role KSM has arrogated. It works on the basis of "weak links," mounting terrorist operations by bringing in people on an ad hoc basis, and immediately disbanding the group afterwards.

Until we hear more, the mystery of who KSM is and what he was responsible for is still a mystery.

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